**The Midas Touch**

Midas was the pleasure-loving King of Macedonia. He was the first person ever to plant a rose garden and he loved to spend his days feasting and listening to music. When he was just a baby a procession of ants was seen carrying grains of wheat up the side of his cradle and placing them between his lips as he slept. When the oracles were asked to explain this omen they said that Midas was a special child who would amass great power and wealth.

King Midas' rose gardens were celebrated and he derived great pleasure in their pristine beauty. Well, it happened that Dionysus, the celebrated god of wine, was travelling nearby with an army of Satyrs, who were half human, half goat- individuals with a serious lust for wine and sensual pleasures. One satyr, Silenus, was an old friend who had been entrusted with the education of Dionysus, so the god of wine was particularly fond of him.

At a particularly rowdy party in camp Silenus got very drunk, which was quite normal for a Satyr, and he wandered away from the rest of his mates, becoming hopelessly lost. Eventually he stumbled his way to King Midas' palace and proceeded to pass out among the King's treasured rose bushes, where he slept off his drunken fit.

In the morning Silenus was discovered among the flowers by the King's gardeners, who didn't know what to make of this loudly-snoring fat old man. All they knew was that their King wouldn't be too happy with having his precious roses trampled, so they tied Silenus up with dairy chains, set a flowering wreath on his head, woke him up and brought him in this ridiculous guise before Midas.

By now Silenus had sobered up and, when asked his identity by King Midas, he told him that he was in the retinue of the great Dionysus, and regaled him with tales of the army’s expedition to Asia. He told the King wonderful stories about the lands they had seen. For ten days and ten nights Silenus entertained King Midas with such stories, and when he was ready to depart, the King ordered a guide to escort the Satyr to Dionysus, who was worried out of his mind about his beloved teacher. Needless to say, Dionysus was very happy and grateful to see Silenus return unharmed, so he sent word to King Midas to name his reward - he could have anything he wished for.

Very happy at his good fortune, King Midas impulsively replied that he wished that **anything he touched would turn to gold**. When asked if he was certain that's what he desired, he said absolutely!

He went into his garden and picked up a stone and at once it turned into gold. He could hardly believe his good fortune. Same with his beautiful roses. As he touched them, they would turn to pure gold...a tree - gold...a blade of grass - solid gold! The bench he sat on - shining, precious gold! Same with the apple he plucked from the tree and the bird that landed on his outstretched finger! Pure gold.

Wow, this is far too cool, he thought, knowing that he now was the richest man who ever lived, with no end to his wealth. All he had to do was lay his Kingly hands on an item and it would be transformed into glittering gold!

But be careful what you pray for, you just may get it. Still out of his mind with happiness at his new-found power, King Midas went into his banquet hall for the daily feast. But as soon as he would pick up a piece of food to eat, it would turn into gold. Dying of thirst, his wine would transform into liquid gold as soon as it touched his lips. King Midas began to panic. This wasn't fun anymore, he was hungry!

Alarmed at his situation, his beloved daughter ran to hug and comfort him, but as he wrapped his arms around her, she instantly turned into a golden statue. That's when King Midas realized the severity of his mistake and, hungry, thirsty and heartbroken, he begged Dionysus to release him of his burden.

Dionysus couldn't help but be entertained and amused by the tribulations of King Midas...The merciful god of wine knew that the King had learned his lesson, so laughing he told Midas to travel to the source of the river Pactolus and to plunge his head and body in the waters.

When King Midas got to the river, he was scared to get in and bathe- what if the river itself turned to gold? He’d be trapped forever! So he filled a pitcher with the water and poured it over his arms… and the gold rinsed right off. He jumped into the water, and washed off his daughter in the same river, thus restoring her back to her living human form.

To this day the sands of the river Pactolus are bright with gold, to commemorate King Midas and his Golden Touch. As for the King, now a little bit wiser, he realized that there is much more to life than wealth and gold...

